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Migration, Demography, and Minority Language Learning: A Case of Wales

Introduction

The current article addresses the importance of encouraging adult migrants to learn indigenous minority languages of their host communities as an essential part of language revitalisation and maintenance strategies. International migrations have been an integral part of human history for centuries. According to the latest report of the International Organisation for Migration, the number of migrants in the world currently amounts to 272 million people, of which two-thirds are labour migrants. It is forecasted that due to the current political and economic situation as well as climate change or natural disasters in the world, this number will increase (International Organisation for Migration [IOM], 2019, p. 2). Migration has a complex and multidimensional impact on the economy and demographics of the sending and receiving countries (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2012). It is the developed countries with high economic performance that are the main destination of migrants (IOM, 2019, p. 2), which, according to some scholars, in many places results in superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007). Developed countries are also characterised by a largely ageing indigenous population, higher life expectancy and negative birth rate. As this situation is a burden for the health care and pension systems of these countries (Le Guével, 2018), immigration is often seen as a long-term solution to these socio-economic problems.

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Competence in the so-called "big" languages such as English, Spanish, French or Russian plays a central role in migration policies across Europe and worldwide. They are necessary to find employment and to communicate internationally. In many states "language competence seems to take on the role of 'gatekeeper' to legal immigration" (Wodak & Boukala, 2015, p. 254): language competences confirmed by appropriate certificates obtained after passing state exams are a common requirement for acquiring citizenship. The advantages of speaking the dominant language of the host community are well-established. Research conducted in different parts of the world points to the link between being able to speak the host society's dominant language and economic prosperity of migrants (Bleakley & Chin, 2004; Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Pieroni et al., 2019). Non-economic benefits are also numerous. In their study of Burundian and Burmese refugees in Michigan, US, Nawyn et al. (2012) found that whereas lack of skills in the dominant language may lead to linguistic isolation at household and/or community levels, the opposite enables migrants to access necessary information and as such provides them with social power. Speaking the language also helps with integration and evokes feelings of belonging.

In many linguistically diverse or historically multilingual regions, however, the local minority languages are important for increasing one's own social and cultural capital, social cohesion, and their economic value (Olko, 2021). In such regions, immigration can further undermine the position of the minority/endangered language by increasing the numbers of non-speakers in the community. Migration, then, while contributing to the economic growth of the region might at the same time negatively affect revitalisation efforts.

The aim of language revitalisation is to revive or strengthen "a particular language in regions where it prevailed before being displaced by other, more powerful or prestigious languages" (Comajoan-Colomé & Coronel-Molina, 2021, p. 897). American linguist Lenore Grenoble (2021, p. 10) distinguishes six broad and overlapping motivations behind undertaking language revitalisation programmes. These include cognitive benefits of bi-/multilingualism, connecting with one's ancestry and cultural heritage, healing and well-being, building community, knowledge and culture. Thus, revitalisation is strongly connected with identity. Revitalisation programmes are aimed at and organised within original or ancestral communities, whether still living in the traditional area or being exiled, dispersed, or resettled. Often, heritage languages of migrant communities, e.g. Polish in the USA, are also revitalised (Flores Farfán & Olko, 2021). Many scholars in the field emphasise that as communities are diverse, dynamic, and volatile any revitalisation project should start with

establishing the linguistic vitality of the language and specific needs of the communities in question. In addition, it is important to recognise motivations, goals, attitudes and underlying linguistic ideologies in the community (Flores Farfán & Olko, 2021, p. 87; Kroskrity, 2009; Sallabank, 2013). As many communities increasingly include migrants, it is argued in this paper that they should be included in any needs assessment and language planning.

While ample research exists on revitalisation and maintenance of minority languages among their heritage populations, research on migrants as speakers of minority languages or how to involve migrants in preserving minority languages is still an emerging field (cf. Augustyniak, 2021; Bermingham & Higham, 2018; Higham, 2014; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2018). In this article, the intersection of migration, linguistic diversity and minority language maintenance will be discussed on the example of Wales. The Welsh society is ageing. According to Cangiano (2019), the population of Wales is "expected to stagnate over the next decade and decrease in the longer term" without net immigration. At the same time the Welsh Government (WG) is strongly invested in safeguarding the position of the Welsh language through legislation and policies. The WG acknowledges that immigration is a challenge for the language and emphasises the role of new speakers in its revitalisation and maintenance. Drawing on data from ethnographic studies in Wales, I discuss the experiences of Polish adult migrants with Welsh, their motivations to learn it and their attitudes and ideologies towards the language.

Wales, its population and the Welsh language

Wales is a country in the United Kingdom with the capital called Cardiff. In the process of devolution in 1999, the Welsh National Assembly was created, which has the power to decide on internal affairs within the so-called decentralised areas, which include, inter alia, economic development, public administration, health and social care. In the following years, the Assembly's powers were expanded, and in 2020 it was officially renamed Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament. Devolution also meant that for the first time in history language policy was included in the social policy established and implemented by the Welsh Government. After decades of slow legitimation and institutionalisation of Welsh driven for the most part by language activism (May, 2000, pp. 105–111), the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure was passed in 2011, giving the Welsh language an official status in Wales (Hodges & Prys, 2019).

Consequently, Wales is now an officially bilingual country with Welsh (*de iure*) and English (*de facto*) as its official languages.

The population size and demographic structure of a given society include the natural increase, ageing processes, extension of life span and migration. The population of Wales has been steadily increasing since the beginning of the 1990s. At the same time, in 2019, the lowest birth rate since 1982 was recorded in Wales, amounting to 1.54 children per woman (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2020). It is estimated that without net migration, the population of Wales will decline in the long run (Alma Economics, 2020; Cangiano, 2019). More than 3,125,000 people lived in Wales in 2019, according to the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, which is the highest number in Welsh history. Due to the geography and economic structure of the country, more than half of the population lives in South East Wales. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, international immigration to Wales increased by 46%, mainly due to the 2004 enlargement of the European Union to ten new countries. As in other parts of the UK, Polish nationals were the most numerous newcomers to Wales. According to the ONS, around 25,000 Polish nationals resided in Wales between July 2020 and June 2021, constituting the most numerous migrant group in the country. The other most common nationalities recorded include the Republic of Ireland, Romania, Portugal and India (ONS, 2021). The increase in the population of Wales in the current decade is to a large extent due to immigration rather than the natural increase (only 8%), despite a fairly extensive pro-family policy, including, but not restricted to, housing and financial childcare support, and tax credits (Welsh Government, 2020).

The Welsh society is definitely an ageing society (Okólski & Fihel, 2012, p. 16). During the twentieth century, the number of people aged 15–64, i.e. economically active, systematically decreased. It is this age group that is crucial for the economy, as it generates the fiscal resources of the state. On the other hand, the number of elderly people increased. According to the ONS (2013) data, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, a significant increase in people over 60 and an increase in the number of people over 90 was observed. This shows that the life span of the Welsh population is increasing. In 2011, the median was 40 years for men and 42 years for women (ONS, 2013). In the quoted report of the ONS, however, attention was drawn to the fact that the increase in the number of school-age children is not only the result of the birth rate, but mainly the effect of immigration of women of reproductive age. The latest data from StatsWales (n.d.) website confirms that both the population of Wales and net immigration have increased in recent years (Figure 1).

In a 2017 document, the Welsh Government admits that, in the long term, immigration is the main way to deal with the socio-economic problems of the demographic decline (Welsh Government, 2017a, p. 20).

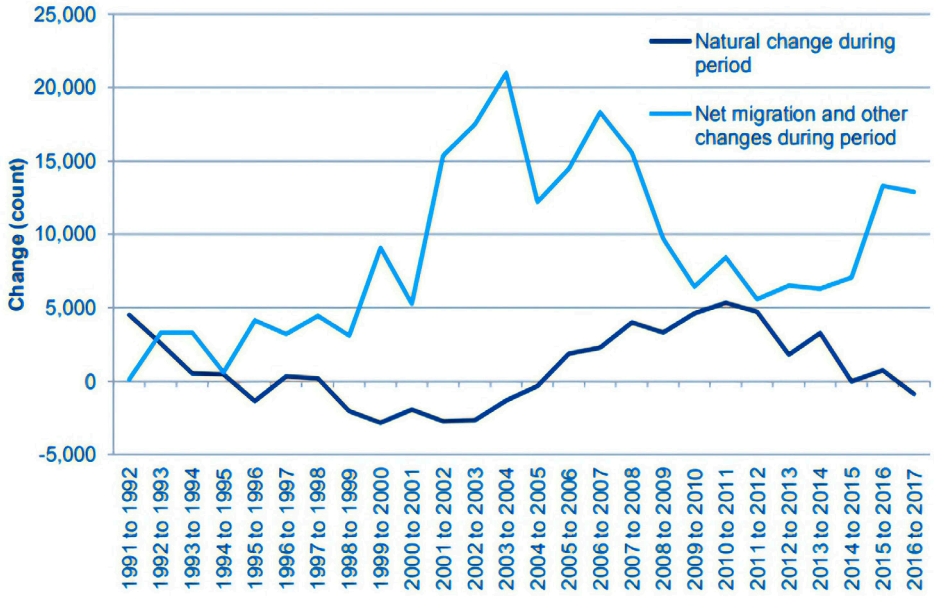

Fig. 1. Components of population change in Wales over time (Welsh Government, 2019b)

As mentioned above, the fertility rate of the Welsh population contributes little to the increase in the population of Wales. Migrants, both internal (from other parts of the UK) and international, are responsible for over 90% of the population growth. Migrants have a significant impact not only on the country's demographic structure, but also on its economy. Recent analyses show that EU immigrants in Wales have a high employment rate. Migrants in Wales find employment in industries such as tourism (11%), manufacturing (9%), construction (3%), higher education (12%), food and drink (27%), healthcare (7%), veterinary services, social welfare (Welsh Government, 2017a, pp. 15–16).[1] Migrants in Wales also show a lot of entrepreneurship creating their own businesses, such as ethnic stores and restaurants. In their research on Poles in South Wales, Julie Knight, John Lever and Andrew Thompson (Knight et al., 2017) noted that many of them had settled in very poor areas characterised by high unemployment since the mine closures in the 1980s, such as Merthyr Tydfil. They were brought there by employment agencies and employed on the so-called zero-hours contracts (which do not guarantee a minimum number of working hours and/or a secure employment) at a local meat processing plant. The lack of jobs and poor knowledge of

[1] The WG report quoted does not provide percentages for the categories of veterinary services and social welfare.

the English language forced them to open their own businesses, which in turn contributed to the transformation and economic recovery of the city.

Demographics and the Welsh language

Welsh is the most vibrant of the Celtic languages. Nonetheless, the numbers and percentages of its speakers have been steadily declining over the twentieth century to reach their all-time low of 18.7%, recorded in the 1991 National Census. Despite a slight increase recorded a decade later (20.8%), the 2011 Census indicated that only 19% of the population declared having skills in the language. Several factors are claimed to have influenced such results, including the methodology employed (Hodges & Prys, 2019). At the time of writing of this article, the results of the 2021 Census are not available. The most recent data on the Welsh language comes from the Annual Population Survey 2020, which revealed that almost 29% of people aged 3 and older were able to speak Welsh. The highest numbers of Welsh speakers lived in Carmarthenshire and Gwynedd, whereas the highest percentages of speakers were recorded in Gwynedd and Anglesey. Broken down, these percentages are slightly less optimistic, with 16.2% of the respondents reporting to be speaking Welsh daily, 4.8% weekly, 6.2% speaking Welsh less often, and 1.6% not speaking Welsh at all despite being able to do so. A worrying phenomenon for the Welsh Government is the fact that every year 2,000–3,000 people fluent in Welsh leave the country, and not all of them return to their homeland (Welsh Government, 2012, p. 8).

Welsh language revitalisation and maintenance measures have been largely based on the presence of the language in statutory education. Welsh became an obligatory subject in all schools in Wales in the National Curriculum of England and Wales under the Education Reform Act 1988. As a result, the following years witnessed the largest growth of Welsh speakers in the 3–15 age group (May, 2000, pp. 105–106). In their most recent strategy *Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers* (Welsh Government, 2017b), the Welsh Government proposed and explained their plans to increase the numbers of people able to speak "more than just a few words of Welsh" (Welsh Government, 2017b, p. 11) and those who use Welsh daily. The strategy is based on three interconnected themes: (1) increasing the number of Welsh speakers through family transmission, statutory education, and life-long learning; (2) increasing the opportunities to use Welsh, both in the workplace and social life; (3) creating favourable conditions "where everyone will want to use the Welsh language" (Welsh Government, 2017b, p. 14). Within Theme 1,

the government emphasises not only the role of intergenerational transmission for achieving their target number of speakers but also that of new speakers, i.e. those who acquired the language outside the home, for example through immersion / bilingual education in schools or as adults (O'Rourke et al., 2015, p. 1). As the policy explains:

> The contribution of speakers who acquire Welsh outside the home is vital to the success of our strategy. Creating the right conditions for new learners of all ages to develop and use their skills is a key objective – from the early years, through every stage of compulsory education and post-16 provision, to opportunities for adults to learn Welsh. (Welsh Government, 2017b, p. 17)

In the document, the Welsh Government describe Welsh as one of the treasures of Wales and state that they wish the language to be relevant for all residents of Wales, regardless of their ethnic and linguistic background (Welsh Government, 2017b, p. 60). The "speakers who acquire Welsh outside the home" discussed in the strategy, then, are not only those born in Wales, but also immigrants born in other countries of the UK and abroad. Consequently, the updated English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019a, p. 15) recognises the importance of Welsh for social integration and acknowledges that the language may prove to be a useful skill in the workplace. The providers of ESOL classes are therefore encouraged to integrate Welsh language into their lessons to help migrants understand the importance of Welsh and embark on learning the language through the Welsh for Adults provision.

Over the last few years two Welsh for Speakers of Languages Other than English (WSOL) courses have been organised by Adult Learning Wales / Addysg Oedolion Cymru (Huw, 2021; National Centre for Learning Welsh, 2021). These were dedicated to refugees and asylum seekers and English learners. They used the *Croeso i Bawb – Cwrs Blasu Cymraeg* [Welcome to All – Welsh Taster Course], developed by the National Centre for Learning Welsh with refugees and non-UK nationals in mind. The two courses run in 2021 and 2022 were delivered through an EU-funded project for refugees called Steps to Integration Success, funded by the Asylum Migration Integration Fund. 17 people registered for the two courses, and six completed the first one. At the time of writing, the second course is still running and the numbers of those completing it are not yet available (Adult Learning Wales, personal communication). Nevertheless, the English and Welsh language provision remain separate as introducing Welsh to migrants was found to be seen by the authorities as too complex (Higham, 2020).

Taking into consideration migration flows and the official policy to create a million Welsh speakers by 2050, it is important to study what motivates adult migrants to learn Welsh, what obstacles they encounter and what discourages them from learning the minority language of the country. Encouraging adult migrants to learn Welsh might encourage more pro-Welsh Family Language Policies (Schwartz, 2010) and greatly help the Welsh Government to achieve their goals. In the remaining part of the paper, I will look at Polish post-2004 migrants in Wales as they are the most numerous non-British nationals currently residing in Wales.

Polish migration to Wales

Polish migration to the UK has a long and complex history (Cybowski, 2018; Sword, 1996). The existing literature on migrations from Poland prior to 2004 is considerable but focuses primarily on Polish migrants in England and Scotland (Patterson, 1961; Sword, 1996). Indeed, the largest numbers of Polish post-WWII migrants resided in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Nottingham, Leeds and other urban centres of England and Scotland (Patterson, 1961, p. 77). The post-war incomers were former military personnel and displaced persons who did not return to Poland because of political reasons. The first Polish migrants seem to have come to the south of Wales during the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. However, it is impossible to discuss it in detail as existing accounts consist of occasional remarks only. A more significant presence of Poles in Wales followed the end of the Second World War, when Polish Resettlement Camps and Polish military hospitals were established in North Wales (Grodziska, 2004, p. 7; Rosiak, 2016, p. 316). The 1951 National Census recorded 6,098 Polish nationals living in Wales that year. According to the sociological study by Jerzy Zubrzycki (1956, pp. 64, 70), 1,700 of Poles, mostly men, resided in Glamorganshire and Flintshire, where they found employment in the Welsh Coalfields (cf. Thompson, 2008).

Over the decades, the numbers of Poles in Wales dwindled until the influx of economic migrants coming after Poland's accession to the EU in 2004. The exact total numbers of those Polish migrants are unavailable (Okólski & Salt, 2014). The estimates range from 800,000 in the first decade in the whole of the UK (Longhi & Rokicka, 2012) to 900,000 in the same period to England and Wales alone (Drinkwater & Garapich, 2013). For many, initial plans for a rather short stay to improve the financial situation turned into a longer or permanent stay

(Drinkwater & Garapich, 2015; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2018; McGhee et al., 2017). As reported by the Migration Observatory (2020), 818,000 Polish nationals resided in the UK in 2019. According to ONS (2021), around 25, 000 Poles currently reside in Wales. The biggest Polish communities in Wales can be found in Wrexham, Cardiff, and Llanelli. However, significant numbers of Polish migrants also live in Merthyr Tydfil and rural Wales (e.g. in Ceredigion).

Research sites and methodology

Data presented in this article was collected in two ethnographic studies of Polish post-2004 migrants in Wales. Both studies employed qualitative data collection methods, i.e. participant observation and semi-structured interviews, as they allow researchers to obtain participant-based, emic perspectives and obtain invaluable insights on the studied issue (Ushioda, 1994, p. 79).

Study 1 was conducted in July and August 2014 in various locations across Gwynedd in North West Wales. Gwynedd is one of the strongholds of the Welsh language with 70% of its population being Welsh speakers. The main aim of this study was to investigate the migration experience, attitudes towards Welsh and motivation to learn Welsh. Hence, the selected participants had to have at least basic knowledge of Welsh. Participants were recruited by contacting Welsh for Adults centres, Welsh-medium and bilingual schools, and by using a snowballing technique (Milroy, 1980). Altogether, 11 participants were recruited, two men and nine women between the age of 26–40. Their declared proficiency in English varied considerably, from A2 to C1. At the time of data collection seven participants had been or were learning Welsh in Welsh for Adults classes, whereas others opted for informal learning from friends and relatives as they found formal learning dissatisfying. Levels of fluency in Welsh also varied considerably among the participants. Some were only at the beginning of their Welsh learning journey and had learned only some basic phrases and expressions, which they used occasionally (A2 level). Others had intermediate spoken skills (B1), which meant sufficient skills to carry out a basic conversation in the language freely. One participant had near native fluency in both speech and writing (C2).

Study 2 was conducted in May and June 2018 in Aberystwyth (Ceredigion). This location was chosen because of significant Polish population living in the area. According to the 2011 National Census, 371 speakers of Polish resided in the town that year. Like Gwynedd, with the estimated 44% of Welsh speakers, Ceredigion is one of the heartlands of the Welsh language. In Aberystwyth itself around 31% of the inhabitants declare having skills in the language (ONS, 2013). This study

focused on Poles' attitudes towards Welsh and factors influencing their decisions to take up (or not) Welsh. The participants were recruited using a questionnaire posted on Facebook groups for the Polish community in Aberystwyth, information leaflets describing aims of the study posted in local shops and local institutions, personal contacts of the researcher and the snowballing technique. The 29 selected participants were between 19 and 48 years old and can be divided into three overlapping categories: (1) current students at Aberystwyth University, (2) graduates of the University / adults without children, (3) Poles with families and children in Welsh schools. Again, all participants were speakers of English as a second language, but their proficiency levels ranged from B2 to C1. Contrary to the participants in Gwynedd, none of the Aberystwyth participants spoke fluent Welsh but all of them were familiar with basic phrases, which they learned in non-formal contexts. Two had attended Welsh classes, either as part of the Welsh for Adults provision or privately. One participant intended to enrol in a Welsh for Adults course in the coming academic year, and a few expressed interest in learning the language in the future.

In both studies, each interview began with the overview of the general purpose of the study, procedures regarding data collection, analysis, and storage, and signing the informed consent. All interviews were conducted in Polish, transcribed, and translated into English by the researcher. To ensure anonymity, each participant was assigned a unique symbol. Their average length was 45 minutes. All interviews were read closely in order to identify common themes and patterns using the content-based thematic analysis and the "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Analysis

The importance of learning Welsh

In general, migrants in both research sites recognised the importance of Welsh in local life, culture, communities and its status as a minority language. Some participants remarked that because of societal bilingualism speaking Welsh is not necessary to communicate and dealing with authorities. At the same time, they acknowledged the importance of the language for local culture and the role migrants play in its ethnolinguistic vitality.

> It's **important for the Welsh culture**, so that **this language doesn't disappear**, because it is slowly declining, there are more and more migrants. But for life here, Welsh is not necessary somehow because everything is in two languages anyway,

> **everyone speaks English anyway**. **All documents are in two languages** so there's no problem to get things done. But I don't mind them [my children] learning two languages, learning Welsh. (AC38M)[2]

Others emphasised the importance of learning Welsh for integration and becoming part of the wider community:

> Yes. For sure. 100%. You **feel more part of it** [community] and **they trust you more, accept you more**. (GC36F)

> It [speaking Welsh] **helps with being accepted more**, that's it. Because when I tell somebody that I'm learning they're like "oh, I didn't know" and they start smiling and switch to Welsh to speak Welsh with me. So it helped in a way for sure. (GC382F)

In addition to better integration and mutual understanding, being able to speak even very basic Welsh was seen as a way of showing respect for the new place of residence and an opportunity to increase one's social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991):

> It opens doors, **it opens a lot of doors**, and it helps meeting people, who are in a similar situation, and… I think it's important to show that I'm interested in your language, your culture. Yes, **it's respect for this place where we live**. And I think it's worth it. (GC38F)

The metaphor of opening doors, however, was used not only to refer to the social benefits of speaking Welsh, but also to the economic ones discussed below.

Economic benefits

The economic benefits that speaking Welsh could bring were widely recognised by the participants. They were very aware that the language is required or seen favourably when applying for certain jobs and positions. When asked about the benefits speaking Welsh could bring, the employment opportunities were high on the participants' lists.

> I started learning **mainly to perhaps find a better job**, because Welsh is often required for office work or… or at least they want you to be learning it. Why? Because I decided

[2] To ensure anonymity and at the same time enable the reader to identify specific utterances with specific speakers, a uniform system of codes has been applied throughout the article denoting the area of study (A – Aberystwyth, G – Gwynedd), social group (A – student, B – university graduate / non-parent, C – parent with children), age (e.g. 20; in the case of people of the same age, an additional number was added), and gender (M or F).

> that since I've been living here for so long I could learn it a bit. Before that I was learning English in the college for a few years, passed my exams. And then I decided it was time for Welsh; I enrolled on a course with a friend. (GC38F)

Some of the participants were not motivated strongly enough to enrol on a Welsh for Adults course or found formal language dissatisfying. Yet, they still tried to pick up some Welsh as they recognised its value on the local job market. As stated by one of the interviewees:

> I mean **I keep trying to pick up a few words from the patients and that's my learning Welsh**. […] I'm not interested in Welsh to such an extent as to enrol on a course. On the other hand, however, **it makes it easier to find a job** in Aberystwyth, because people here feel connected / attached to this language and you can impress them with the knowledge of it. (AB31M)

Others, despite not learning Welsh themselves due to reasons such as lack of time or long working hours had positive attitudes towards their children learning the language hoping for better employment prospects for them in the future:

> **Better jobs**, first of all. Hopefully, they [my children] will want to participate in some Welsh organisations. It seems to me that **it's primarily about jobs, about friends, and more opportunities**. (AC37F)

Many migrants enter the job market in the host country by doing the so-called entry-level low paid jobs. In Wales, over the last few years the number of job positions quoting skills in Welsh as key or desirable has increased, as observed by an Aberystwyth University graduate:

> When I first applied for a job at the University there was no such thing as Welsh required at B or C level. It must have been two years ago that **they started to add to every job application or job description that Welsh is required** and you had to declare whether you know it and at what level. Because we, of course, always said that ok, if there was such a need, then we will learn. At least at entry level. Now there is no such option, now it is required that you have written and oral skills at probably B level. Now, there is no chance for us to get a job. All the work that I could do always requires Welsh, at least fluent, written and oral. (AB24F)

As shown in the above quote, non-Welsh speakers, including many migrants, cannot access certain types of jobs or even find employment outside entry-level jobs. Yet, despite the Welsh Government's wish to create new speakers of Welsh, there is a significant gap

between the ESOL and WSOL provisions. Whereas ESOL courses are subsidised by the Welsh Government and thus cost-free for migrants, Welsh classes are not. The cost of enrolling on a Welsh for Adults course, although not high, constitutes a disincentive for those willing to learn the language but remaining in low-income employment (Higham, 2014, p. 115; Rosiak, 2018, p. 178). What is also significant in the quote above is that the participant used to declare willingness to learn Welsh should it be required of her, but such requirement was never implemented. This indicates that imposing a language requirement as part of language policy is an extremely important incentive for encouraging language learning. This is confirmed by another participant, a student at Aberystwyth University:

> If I really needed it, if they only spoke Welsh, I would definitely learn it. But because they also speak English, most people, basically everyone… […] but if I had to learn it, If I needed it to live here, I'd definitely learn it. (AA202M)

In the case of Aberystwyth, then, considering the significant number of Polish (and other international) students, such a requirement could be introduced as part of university courses, for example in the form of a Welsh taster course.

Use of Welsh in the community

Theme 2 of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy centres around increasing the use of Welsh in various contexts, including the workplace and the social use of Welsh. The policymakers recognise that language learning is a vital part of the integration process (Welsh Government, 2017b, p. 68). They underline that "the attitude and contribution of fluent Welsh speakers will also be important" (Welsh Government, 2017b, p. 69). To that end, they propose developing a programme for fluent/native Welsh speakers which would involve them in informal Welsh teaching. Indeed, such a programme has been launched by the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Based on the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Programme developed in California (Hinton, 2001), *Siarad* (Welsh 'to speak') consists of pairing fluent Welsh speakers with learners at Intermediate, Advanced and Proficient levels for 10 hours of conversations in informal settings, e.g. in cafes. Despite being an excellent way to improve speaking skills and increase confidence of language learners, this scheme is not without its limitations, which include meagre pre-existing awareness of the needs of language learners on the part of the fluent speakers. As such an awareness is an invaluable asset in language revitalisa-

tion and maintenance efforts it should be promoted widely. Let us look at a quote from an interview with a university student.

> I had **tried to pick up a few basic phrases**, in particular **when I was still in Poland** and I was preparing to go to university, but later when **I came here and saw how often the language is used** here, that the language is used sporadically and in the situations when the people really want to communicate in Welsh, they don't have to do it, I decided that perhaps learning Welsh is not my priority. Now that I work in two restaurants […] and I talk to people who take orders […] **it rarely happens that somebody would start a conversation in Welsh**. We would have to then apologise and ask them to speak English. But it rarely happens. **It's more common for two or more people to speak Welsh between themselves** and when the waiter comes up to them, **they automatically start speaking English** […]. So I don't think it [learning Welsh] is necessary. (AA19M)

The student, unlike many others, was aware of Welsh when planning his relocation to Aberystwyth, motivated to look for information about the language and learn a few basic phrases. However, after the move he realised that English is the language to talk to with strangers. Cultural anthropologist Carol Trosset (1986, p. 168) explains that in Wales "a high value on courtesy and hospitality dictates that visitors should not be excluded but should be spoken to in a language they understand, which often necessitates the use of English". This in turn makes it extremely difficult for learners to practise their Welsh spontaneously in social contexts as "the ethic of politeness which encourages the speaking of English to non-Welsh speakers is deeply ingrained in people's minds, to the point that it can be very difficult to overcome even when there is a good reason for doing so" (Trosset, 1986, p. 170). As the above quote shows, the student's experience after the move changed his attitudes towards learning the language.

The integration of migrants, be it social, economic, or linguistic, is a long-term process "wherein immigrant newcomers and the communities in which they settle – both the individuals and institutions – mutually adapt to one another" (Alba & Nee, 2003, p. 23). Encouraging non-Welsh speakers to enrol in Welsh for Adults courses or organising Welsh-medium community activities (Hodges & Prys, 2019) will not yield sufficient results without changing the attitudes and practices of fluent speakers on a larger scale. Campaigns aimed at fluent/native speakers increasing awareness of the need to use Welsh with learners in spontaneous social situations would benefit not only migrants learning Welsh but all learners of Welsh.

Statutory Welsh-language education

As mentioned above, Welsh language revitalisation and maintenance is strongly based on statutory Welsh language education. Welsh is present in all Welsh schools, either as a medium of instruction (Welsh language and bilingual schools) or taught as a second language (English-medium schools). Participants in both studies looked at compulsory statutory learning of Welsh in schools by their children in favourable light. Learning Welsh was seen primarily as having cognitive benefits. In addition, they were very much aware of the value of Welsh on the local job market:

> I think it's good [that they learn Welsh], because even if it's not useful to them, if they decide to return to Poland or any other part of the world, the sheer fact that they learn Welsh… well, you know, **the more languages you learn at this age, the more it stimulates the brain to develop later**. So, I am absolutely in favour of it. (AC40F)

> I think it is especially important **because we live in Wales**. It gives them **more opportunities**, and it is known that we learn to have a **better job**, to have a **better life**. So, if it is to do no harm and can help, then I am absolutely in favour of it. (AC37F)

Regardless, the parents interviewed perceived the Welsh language skills to be an advantage locally not globally, claiming that the opportunities to use Welsh are rather limited outside the country:

> It is important for the children **as long as we live here** […] I would say… it [language learning] should be the basis of teaching in general, because **young children just learn automatically**, for them it doesn't take much effort and **expanding their creativity** by learning another language is a great thing. However, **if they leave Wales**, I suspect **this language [Welsh] will disappear** because they will not be able to learn it. Unless at some point in their adult life they decide that they are fascinated with it. But at this point, when they are here… (AC35F)

Despite very positive attitudes towards multilingualism in general and learning Welsh in particular, they were reluctant to send their children to Welsh-medium schools. In their decisions, they mostly followed other parents without putting much thought to the future consequences of their choice:

> I must admit that **my friends decided it for me**, because when I asked them, most of their children attended [name of school]. So, I decided that since they send their

> children there, I'd send mine there too because **if they are satisfied, that's all I needed**. However, I am convinced that if I had done thorough research earlier, on my own, I would probably have sent them to [Catholic school] because of our church traditions. Well, because this part of our Polish identity is disappearing here and that would be supported by the school there. (AC35F)

However, in both research sites parents expressed a concern that they would not be able to help their children with their homework if it was in Welsh. For some, this concern was the main deterrent:

> […] of course we deliberately did not send them to a Welsh school, **because then our help would be limited to a very high degree**. Even if I tried to learn the language and catch up with them, I would not reach the level at which they are learning, I would not be able to help them. (AC35F)

It would transpire, then, that migrant parents are not aware of the fact that the Welsh-medium schools are in fact bilingual and all communication between the school and the parents, as well as homework, is conducted bilingually. Consequently, to encourage migrants to send their children to Welsh-medium or bilingual schools, this information should be communicated clearly and universally to the parents of the children whose home language is different than Welsh.

Migrants don't do it?

A recent study by the linguists Christine Muir, Zoltán Dörnyei and Svenja Adolphs (Muir et al., 2021) explored the role of role models in language learning – a somewhat understudied area in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The study is grounded in Canadian-American psychologist Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and the concept of "vicarious learning" (Muir et al., 2021, p. 2). In this study, the vast majority of participants who were learners of English had role models. These were often people from their vicinity such as teachers, parents, friends, or colleagues. The participants also reported having an actor, politician, or musician as their role model. The need of having a role model was also expressed by one of the participants in my study:

> I've met a few people here, but I haven't met a person who wouldn't be Welsh, I mean they weren't born in Wales or have lived here for most of their lives and could speak

> Welsh. I haven't had a chance to meet such a person, who would be from England, Ireland, Scotland or from outside the UK and has learned the language to a level which would allow them to freely converse with others in that language. (AA19M)

Admittedly, there may be a limited number of migrants who have attained significant proficiency in Welsh. The exact number of non-UK born nationals enrolled in courses offered by the National Centre for Learning Welsh is not known as data is not collected (National Centre for Learning Welsh, personal communication). However, as pointed out by Muir et al. (2021, p. 2), when the availability of role models in an individual's immediate context is limited, the situation can be remedied by expanding the visibility of possible role models through the press and mass media. Indeed, over the years Welsh and British media reported on economic migrants and refugees successfully learning Welsh (Clifton, 2016; Morris, 2020; Tegeltija, 2016; White, 2016). It seems, however, that these reports may not reach other migrants, potential adult learners of Welsh.

Conclusions

The ageing of societies and increased life expectancy constitute a considerable challenge for many states, as they entail increased expenditure on health care, social care, and the creation of infrastructure for the needs of the elderly. It seems that when social programmes and social assistance aimed at increasing the fertility rate of the indigenous population are not delivering the expected results, immigration may be a solution to the problem. The Welsh Government has no doubts that immigration is and will continue to be an extremely important element of the country's demographics and economy. At the same time, however, it draws attention to the fact that migrations pose a challenge to the situation of the Welsh language, which is an inseparable and extremely important element of the history and culture of the country. Realising the importance of migration for the future of the economy, the Welsh Government should continue working on a language policy towards migrants, which still is a neglected area. As shown in this article, Polish migrants have positive attitudes towards the Welsh language and recognise its place in Welsh society and culture. They are also aware that speaking even elementary Welsh is important for integration and belonging. Admittedly, including adult migrants

in language revitalisation plans poses different challenges, and the solutions developed for teaching Welsh to speakers of languages other than English could be used in wider contexts.

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Migration, Demography, and Minority Language Learning: A Case of Wales

The present article discusses the role of adult migrants to Wales in the country's demographics and maintenance and promotion of the Welsh language. The Welsh society is an ageing society, predicted in the long run to rely on immigration as a solution to the socio-economic problems of the demographic decline. At the same time, the Welsh Government (WG) is strongly invested in revitalising the Welsh language through legislation and policies. The WG acknowledges that immigration is a challenge for the Welsh

language and emphasises the role of new speakers in its revitalisation and maintenance. Drawing on data from two ethnographic studies in Wales, I discuss the experiences of Polish adult migrants with Welsh, their motivations to learn it and their attitudes and ideologies towards the language. I also provide recommendations for adjustments in language planning on the micro-level.

Keywords:

migration; demography; Welsh language; Polish language; language maintenance

Migracja, demografia i nauka języków mniejszościowych: przypadek Walii

Niniejszy artykuł omawia rolę dorosłych migrantów na terenie Walii w demografii kraju oraz w zachowaniu i promocji języka walijskiego. Społeczeństwo walijskie jest społeczeństwem starzejącym się, co oznacza, że zgodnie z przewidywaniami będzie w dłuższej perspektywie polegało na imigracji jako rozwiązaniu społeczno-ekonomicznych problemów niżu demograficznego. Jednocześnie rząd walijski jest mocno zaangażowany w rewitalizację języka walijskiego poprzez ustawodawstwo i prowadzoną politykę. Rząd przyznaje, że imigracja stanowi wyzwanie dla języka walijskiego i podkreśla rolę nowych użytkowników w jego rewitalizacji i zachowaniu. W oparciu o dane z dwóch badań etnograficznych przeprowadzonych w Walii artykuł omawia doświadczenia dorosłych imigrantów z Polski z językiem walijskim, ich motywacje do nauki oraz postawy i ideologie wobec języka. Przedstawia również zalecenia dotyczące korekt w planowaniu języka (ang. *language planning*) na poziomie mikro.

Słowa kluczowe:

migracja; demografia; język walijski; język polski; zachowanie języka

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